

School of Theology at Claremont



10011462106

BX
5097
P48
1852



The Library
of the
CLAREMONT

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

1325 North College Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711-3199
1/800-626-7820

Wm. Lloyd Garrison
5
25
cl

LETTER TO MISS SELTON,

BX
50917
.P48
1852

SUPERIOR OF THE
SOCIETY OF SISTERS OF MERCY, AT PLYMOUTH.

Philip BY
HENRY, LORD BISHOP OF EXETER.

~~~~~

LONDON:  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.  
1852.

LIBRARY  
CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
1325 N. COLLEGE AVE.  
CLAREMONT, CA 91711-3199

# A L E T T E R,

&c.

&c.

BISHOPSTOWE, *March 20, 1852.*

MY DEAR MISS SELLON,

I HAVE read your 'Reply' to Mr. Spurrell's pamphlet with the attention which is due to it, and which it could not fail to excite in one who feels towards you the sincere admiration which I feel for your deep, continued, consistent, unexampled (at least in these latter days) devotion of yourself, your time, your talents of every kind, to the service of your Redeemer, and of His poor, His little ones, whom He emphatically regards not only as His own, but as Himself.

But while I feel thus towards you, I must not disguise my opinion on what I have read. There are particulars in your case, as stated by yourself, which make it my duty to withdraw from that connection with your institution which is indicated by the title of Visitor, but which has been, as might be expected, little more than a mere title. So long as the nature and operations of the sisterhood could be judged of by the rules which have been published to the world, especially those which were submitted to me, and were in part prescribed by me, before I consented to become officially connected with your community, I could have no hesitation in giving to you whatever encouragement the use of my name might afford.

But I frankly avow that I do not think those rules form any longer a true criterion of the nature of your institution. Let me cite the two first of them:—

“ I. A legal instrument has been prepared, by which

“ certain of the sisters have agreed to live together (con-  
 “ forming to certain regulations sanctioned by the Bishop,  
 “ for the better conduct of the interior of the institution),  
 “ but *with free liberty to any sister to withdraw, if it shall*  
 “ *so seem good to her.*”

This was the prime, the fundamental principle, on which I consented to be your Visitor. That it has been knowingly and intentionally departed from I am very far from saying. You are incapable of knowingly departing from any condition under which you have ever placed yourself; yet that it has been *virtually* abandoned, is, in my judgment, manifest, not merely from the portion of your letter to Miss —, cited in the pamphlet of Mr. Spurrell, p. 39, but also from your own comment in your ‘Reply,’ p. 9, and still more from your observations, in p. 21, on “the sacred calling,” “the calling of God” to your sisterhood, and the sinfulness of “looking back” in any who “had perceived this calling, “and who, having, after due trial, given herself to it, had “yet retracted.”

I avoid entering into consideration of the sacredness of such a calling, still more into the question whether it be of such a kind that to relinquish it is indeed, as you scruple not to declare, “yielding to temptation as did Demas,” who, be it remembered, forsook an apostle, and with him the service of his divine Lord, “loving this world rather than to “suffer hardships.” I enter not into this consideration, I say, because it is enough for my present purpose to show the virtual inconsistency of such a calling with the first fundamental rule of your institution, that there be “free liberty “to every sister to withdraw, if it shall so seem good to “her.”

Now let me not be misunderstood. I am very far from blaming you and the sisters at aiming at what is impossible, when you and they have listened to “that voice in the heart

“ which bids it think no longer of earth, which calls the soul  
 “ to live only for the Lord, in bringing other souls to Him.”  
 I only mean that this is a course of life beyond and above  
 that which was contemplated when I accepted the office of  
 your Visitor.

II. Again, with regard to your second rule :—“ That any  
 “ sister so withdrawing, or in any way ceasing to be a mem-  
 “ ber of the Society, shall be entitled to her own personal  
 “ property ; but neither she nor her heirs shall be entitled  
 “ to any share of the common property of the Society.”

Now how does the course actually followed by you accord  
 with this? The rule implies that the property which every  
 sister may bring with her shall continue to be hers, at her  
 sole disposal ; and that when by death she ceases to be a  
 sister, she may bequeath her property to whomsoever she  
 may think fit. This was a matter particularly contemplated  
 when those rules received my sanction ; for I apprehended  
 that, without some such provision, great abuses might occur,  
 and still greater be suspected ; and yet I read, in p. 22 of  
 your ‘ Reply,’ “ We have all things in common. When  
 “ we receive money of our own, we put it into the treasurer’s  
 “ hands, and it goes to the common stock, unless any sister  
 “ thinks it *her duty to send it* out of the community *as soon*  
 “ *as she receives it.*” What then becomes of her personal  
 property in anything which she does not think it her duty to  
 send away as soon as she receives it? It should seem that  
 nothing but a sense of “ duty ” would justify a sister in em-  
 ploying any part of her own funds, in any manner, or for  
 any purpose, except the increase of the common stock of the  
 community. Inclination, affection, preference on any ac-  
 count, except “ duty,” is not to be permitted to influence a  
 sister in disposing of her property, even “ as soon as she  
 “ receives it.” Nor, if she then omit to attend to what may  
 be deemed the demands of “ duty,” is she at liberty after-

wards to regard the property as her own : it will have been merged in the common fund.

Again, if she use the liberty reserved to her by the first rule—"to withdraw, if it shall so seem good to her"—it should seem that there will be no "personal property of her "own" to which she will be "entitled." All will have passed to the community ; and if she withdraw, she must be content to withdraw penniless, or with only that which the sisters may think fit to give to her.

Now there may have been some inaccuracy in your statement on this head, or in my interpretation of it ; but be this as it may, if there be here any approximation to accuracy, I cannot understand how the practical arrangements of your institution are compatible with the second fundamental rule.

And here again I entreat you not to misunderstand me. I am far from condemning any lady of mature age, as all the sisters are, for doing what they will with their own, much less for bestowing it altogether on an institution whose object is the honour of God and the service of His creatures. I only say that the two principal rules which I deemed it necessary to require, as conditions of my being officially connected with your society, have been violated ; and the conclusion to which I am unwillingly brought, is, that my official connection with you must cease.

In truth, the progress of your action has been such as makes a visitor absolutely useless, or worse than useless. Such an officer must have either nothing to do, or a great deal too much ; for, if he does anything, he must have to inquire into all the internal arrangements of a community of ladies, labouring for the best and noblest ends, yet doing things, be they many or few, in the exercise of their Christian liberty, as allowed by the Church, which the visitor may deem inexpedient, and even perilous—or, at least, giving scandal not only to the ill-informed, but to many others,

who are reasonably jealous of anything that has even the semblance of corrupting the purity of doctrine or of practice in our own Apostolic Church. Under these circumstances, it may be the duty of him who is the visitor—and I frankly own, that I feel it to be my own duty—to avoid the appearance of sanctioning what, if he continues visitor, he either must have the appearance of sanctioning and approving, or must, by a very questionable exercise of authority, forbid.

For these reasons you will not be surprised at the resolution which I have felt it my duty to announce to you. In doing so, I hope that neither you nor others will consider me as ceasing to take the same lively interest as before in the prosperity of your institution, or as ceasing most thankfully to acknowledge the great amount of spiritual as well as of temporal good which God has been pleased to make that institution the instrument of conferring on the destitute—the spiritually destitute—multitude around you. Though I cease to be your Visitor, yet I shall be at all times glad to receive you, and to have the same cordial communication with you which I have been accustomed to have—in particular, to give to you and yours that comfort and support which, for my office' sake, you tell me that you derive from the blessing of your bishop. May He whose faithful, whose devoted, whose most exemplary servants you are, shower down His blessings upon you! May He give you a right judgment in all things! Enlightening you with His wisdom, sustaining you by His strength, cheering you by the sure tokens of His love!

Before I conclude, there are a few words yet to be said. The first is a word—I will not say of censure, but of caution. Let me warn you of what I deem the extravagance of your claim on the obedience of the Sisterhood—the “Holy obedience” as your rule calls it. So rigorous a demand of the submission of the understanding, as well as the will, of one

human being to another, cannot, in my judgment, be enforced without serious danger to the spiritual condition both of her who governs, and of those who are governed. Even if in your own case there be, as I hope and believe there are, qualities which may render the system less mischievous than it would be in many others, yet the system itself seems to me hardly reconcilable with that prime Christian grace, humility. While I am on this subject I will remark on the title which you claim of "Spiritual Mother," and still more "Mother in Christ." Is then a commission from your Saviour claimed by you? Did He, while on earth, institute such societies as yours, and place predecessors of yours at the head of them? Be content, I beseech you, with being a "*Sister* in Christ" of those who labour with you and will rejoice to recognise you as the Superior—the only title which the original rules give you; as such, they will, I doubt not, love and honour you as a mother.

But there remains an act of justice to be done to you and to the sisterhood. In the attack upon you—of which let me say, once for all, that its tone and manner excite in me, as in every other whom I have heard speak of it, a feeling of intense and unmitigated disgust—I read the following passage: "When it is known that the orphan girls have been brought to confession!—when it is known that the Sisters, the superintendents and teachers in the schools and asylums, inculcate to the utmost of their power into the minds of the scholars and inmates of these establishments their own false religious views, their charities at once assume a very different complexion to ordinary ones. Institutions where alms are given out, and error withal, are no blessing to any country, and the sooner they cease to exist the better."

In consequence of reading this passage, containing a charge which no Christian minister, I thought, could have permitted

himself to write, without first ascertaining that there was strong evidence to sustain it, I felt it my duty to communicate with the incumbent of the district in which the Orphans' Home, its schools, its asylums are situate. My letter called on him to tell me—

I. “Whether, as minister of the parish in which the Orphans' Home is situate, you visited the *schools* kept by the Sisters, especially that for sailor boys, and whether you found that they were taught according to the principles of the Church of England? Were there any,—if any, what—books used in the schools, not on the list of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge?”

II. “In their visitings of the sick did the Sisters interfere with your pastoral charge, especially did they teach them any Popish or unsound doctrine?”

III. “Was *confession* part of the regular discipline of the Home?”

“Were the orphans or any one else *required* to *confess*, or was it all voluntary?”

IV. “Had you any opportunity of seeing, or reason for believing, that either worship of the Virgin Mary, or any other Romish practice, existed in the Home?”

To these questions I received the following answers:—

I. “As minister of the parish, I have visited the schools kept by the Sisters. Their College of Sailor Boys I visit every week, and catechise all the boys for an hour in the Church Catechism. Their orphan girls, also, I have long been in the habit of catechising two days in the week, for an hour each time. I am as confident, therefore, as I can be, that they are all taught strictly in accordance with the principles of the Church of England. I do not remember ever having seen any books used for their religious instruction not on the S. P. C. K. list. I believe, however, Dr. Watts' little book of hymns and moral songs is rather a

“ favourite with some of the children, which is not, I think, on the list. At the Sailor Boys' College some educational works also are used, not on the Society's list, such books as 'Keith on the Globes,' for instance.”

II. “ In their visiting the sick, so far from interfering with my pastoral charge, they have on very many occasions materially aided me, both in bringing cases to my knowledge, and also in reading to them. They have a rule never to leave any book in a sick room, which is not in the S. P. C. K. list; and this rule I can, with much confidence, say has been very strictly acted upon. I generally know *when* they have been visiting any poor sick person, by seeing a new large Bible and Prayer Book in the room. I do not believe they have ever taught other than the sound doctrine of the Church of England in their visits.”

III. “ CONFESSIO*N* is not a part of the regular discipline of their house. Those who *desire* confession are free to use it, but none are required to confess, or considered in any way to break rule by not doing so. It is purely a voluntary matter. Several ladies who have been with the Sisters a considerable time do not use confession.

“ A few of the elder orphans have been to me for confession, but it was at their own desire, and they have found in it, I believe, great comfort and help. It met their need, poor children, before going to holy communion, considering what had been the scenes and temptations of their early life.”

IV. I do not for a moment believe that either worship of the B. V. Mary, or any other practice peculiar to the Church of Rome, exists in their house. I have had very frequent opportunities of observation, but have never seen anything of the sort.

“ I might say much of the great and good works which

“ this devoted band of Sisters are carrying out ; but I have  
 “ confined myself to answering your Lordship’s questions  
 “ as plainly as I can, which is what I believe your Lordship  
 “ would now wish me to do.

“ I am, &c.,

“ G. R. PRYNNE.”

I have thus given the questions put by me to the minister of the district in which your House of Mercy is situate, and his answers. I have done this simply as an act of justice.

The concluding paragraph of his answer induced me to request from him a further communication, which, however, I will not narrate to you ; but I shall give it to the world, as an Appendix to this Letter, which, after the statements already made by Mr. Spurrell and yourself, you will not be surprised that I should publish.

Believe me, my dear Miss Sellon,

ever to remain your faithful, admiring, and  
 affectionate friend,

H. EXETER.

## APPENDIX.

---

(A.)

*Letter to Bishop of Exeter from Rev. G. R. Prynne.*

ST. PETER'S, PLYMOUTH,  
March 20, 1852.

MY LORD,

IN obedience to your Lordship's wishes, I proceed to furnish your Lordship with some account of the good works carried out by the Sisters of Mercy.

1. *The Orphans' Home.*—I name this first because it has been the longest in existence. The number of children at present in this institution is 27, most of whom have lost both parents, but some have been admitted who were deserted by their parents, and were found living with bad relatives, who were bringing them up without any religion, and in an atmosphere of gross sin. They scarcely knew of the existence of God when they first came, but had seen a fearful amount of sin. It is very different with them now, poor children! They are most carefully taught, and watched over with all the tenderness which could be bestowed on them by Christian parents. They are an intelligent set of children, and exceedingly well conducted. As their clergyman I catechise them twice in the week. All, except some of the very young ones, know the Catechism; the elder and more advanced ones are getting to understand it well. They know a good deal also about the Bible. I often get them to sing me one of the numerous hymns they have learnt after I have done catechising. They have sweet voices, and when one thinks of what they once were and might now have been, it is most touching to hear them sing hymns about their Saviour's mercy. One hymn I specially delight to hear them sing. They divide themselves into two parts, and answer each other.

“ Why hast Thou for our earthly gloom  
Thus left Thy Father's hall?—  
Not for the righteous am I come,  
But sinners to recal.

What bear'st Thou from yon desert rock  
 Upon Thy shoulders home?—  
 A sheep that left My Father's flock,  
 Whom I have lost and found."

Lost and found ! it is their own case, dear children ; and the song throughout is so strikingly applicable to themselves. They attend daily morning and evening prayers at the church. Five of the elder ones were confirmed last summer, and have since been communicants. They receive sufficient secular education to fit them for their future position in life, which is meant to be that of respectable servants. Reading, writing, and the elements of arithmetic are taught them, and, of course, needlework. They learn to cook, and scrub, and clean, &c., from having to do everything of that sort in their own house, all under the constant superintendence of one of the Sisters. They are a happy, merry little flock.

2. *College for Sailor Boys.*—The object of this institution is to take in forlorn and destitute boys (dozens of whom may be found any day, in a town like this, running about the streets in rags and dirt, without any home or employment), and to give them a Christian education. Most of them, when they enter, can neither read nor write, and are in the most profound ignorance about religion. To talk to them of God, of heaven and hell, of their own souls, and the account they will one day have to give of themselves, is indeed to bring strange things to their ears. They are kept in the College until it is thought they are sufficiently instructed to be able to discharge their duties as British sailors in a Christian spirit. I catechise them every week. Some of those who have been at the College some time know and understand the Church Catechism, but the new comers are very ignorant. The present number of boys in the College is 26. Four of the boys were confirmed last summer, and three have lately been entered in the navy, and are on board ships in the harbour. When these get leave they come to spend the time with their old companions, and accompany them to church. The boys are all taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and, some of the more advanced ones, French and the use of the globes. They have a reading-room, and some are very fond of reading, especially books of travels. Their recreation hours are well provided for. A large mast has been erected for them, fitted with yards, &c.,

like the mast of a ship, and one of the old sailors exercises them on this. They are taught the sword exercise, and are about to have some large guns and learn the gun exercise. They are to be taught also in all sorts of gymnastic exercises. Last summer I went out with them for a cruise. I first took them into Cornwall, and showed them one of the large copper-mines. Our next cruise was to Havre de Grace in France, where we remained some days, and saw all that was to be seen in a large French port. The boys *would* not like the French, and as they sailed out of harbour sang "Hearts of Oak," and "Rule Britannia." They came into my cabin for prayers morning and evening, and on Sunday had the prayers of the Church of England on deck. I must not tire your Lordship, but I think it well to speak of these institutions in a way calculated to give your Lordship some idea of the spirit in which they are conducted, and the sort of influences brought to bear upon them, beyond giving the mere detail.

3. *House of Peace.*—The object of this house is to provide a home for poor destitute girls who have no other, and to give them religious instruction. The number at present in the house is twelve. They are trained for nurses or servants, and are housed, clothed, fed, and educated. Several of them have been confirmed and are communicants.

4. *Home for Old Sailors.*—This house is meant to receive destitute old sailors and give them a quiet home for the last few years of their life. There are five persons at present in the house, four old men and one old woman, the wife of one of them. They are expected to attend the Church service daily if in health. One old man died about three months since at the age of 80. He was in extreme poverty when taken in, and seemed quite alone in the world, without any friends.

5. *Industrial School.*—This is one of the most important works conducted by the Sisters. It was formerly held at Devonport, but owing to a fire they were obliged to quit the rooms there. About the same time a large chapel belonging to a sect called "Second Advent people" was for sale in this parish; the Sisters bought it, and, now that the pews and galleries are cleared away, it is a splendid room for their purpose. They have at present 120 young women regularly engaged, who were out of employ or could get no constant work. They are paid in pro-

portion to their capabilities. Religious instruction is given them at intervals during work-time. They are all brought to the parish church for prayers every morning at eight o'clock. This school seems, as yet, to have been signally blessed in the conversion of sinners. Many who before they entered were living in utter carelessness or gross sin, have been led to repentance, and are now leading, as far as one can judge, steady Christian lives. The school is likely to increase still further. I get constant applications for a recommendation, which is required from the clergyman in whose parish they are.

*Houses of Hope.*—These are lodging-houses for poor families. Certain rules are laid down as conditions for admission, the object of which is to preserve cleanliness, sobriety, and peace in the homes of the poor. At first these requisites to a home were not appreciated, but after a few months the applications for admission became more numerous, and from one house they have increased to seven. The number of inmates is now from 150 to 160. A sister says family prayers every morning and evening for those that can attend. There is a reading-room excellently fitted for the men, though not yet well stocked with books. The room is also open to any men in the parish of reputable character who will pay 3*d.* a-week. There is also a play-room for the children, stocked with a large rocking-boat and other play-things. Your Lordship will find fuller details about these houses in the account I enclose, written by one of themselves.

7. *Lodging-houses connected with the Industrial School.*—Many young women, willing to work, and anxious to keep respectable, have no home to go to. The lodging-houses in the neighbourhood are so vile that they could scarcely hope to live in them uncontaminated. Nice clean beds are provided them, and a recreation room for them to take their meals in and read and do anything they like in spare time. A Sister sleeps in the house, and is responsible for its due order.

8. There is also in this parish a *day Ragged School*, conducted by the Sisters, which has an average attendance of from 60 to 70. Also an evening school for poor persons who work during the day. Two evenings in the week for boys and two for girls.

9. *House for Destitute Children.*—This house is in Devonport, and is a home for little children, as the House of Peace is for

elder girls. At present there are nine children in this house, all taken from destitution and misery, to be well clothed and fed, and brought up as Christian children.

10. *Soup-kitchens*.—From 80 to 100 persons are fed daily with soup and bread. On Sundays hot puddings are given to families who are church-goers, which often serves for their dinner.

Besides these good works done in this neighbourhood, they have also a hospital at Bristol and an Orphans' Home at Alverstoke, near Gosport. The latter is, I suppose, conducted just in the same way as the one here.

Such, my Lord, are the works which, to my knowledge, the Sisters are carrying on at present in this neighbourhood. The printed account which I enclose is in many respects much better and fuller than mine, but I thought your Lordship might require an account from me as the minister of the parish in which the Sisters live. However, I had no choice whether to send the enclosed or write, as your Lordship requested me to write. If I have written some things which were unnecessary, I trust your Lordship will be able to gather, from what remains, the information required.

I enclose also an account which my curate, Mr. Hetling, has drawn up, of the exertions of the Sisters during the time of cholera in 1849. It is in nothing exaggerated, and these exertions, it must be remembered, were carried on for nearly four months. I knew but little of Miss Sellon or the Sisters before that time, but the awful pestilence brought us much together. They were not living in my parish at the time, and when the cholera broke out with deadly violence, I had a visit from Miss Sellon one evening. "I am come," she said, "to ask if you will accept the services of myself and sisters to visit the sick and dying in your parish." A distrustful thought crossed me. Shall I bring these devoted ladies from another parish, I thought, to such scenes and such danger? I must have hesitated, and said some words to this effect. "You must not look upon us as mere ladies," said Miss Sellon, "but as Sisters of Mercy; and the proper place for Sisters of Mercy is amongst the sick and dying; if you refuse our aid, we must offer it elsewhere." "I will not refuse," I replied: "come with me." And together we went,

accompanied by Mr. Hetling, into the very worst of it. From that night, their work began and abated not, until, through God's mercy, the sickness itself did.

My account has been rather a long one, but to give a detailed account of their works has made this necessary, for their deeds of love and mercy to Christ's poor abound.

I remain, with deep respect,

Your Lordship's obedient servant,

G. R. PRYNNE.

*The Lord Bishop of Exeter.*

I should have added, in speaking of the College of Sailor Boys, that, when they go to sea, they have a complete fit-out, and have presented to them a very handsome Bible and Prayer Book.

(B.)

*Letter to the Bishop of Exeter from Rev. G. H. Hetling.*

MY LORD,

ST. PETER'S, March 18, 1852.

IN compliance with your expressed desire I subjoin to Mr. Prynné's statement of the parochial work of the Sisterhood a few particulars of their exertions during the cholera. It were too long and too sad to retrace and describe all that occurred during that sad visitation. It has been my lot in life for one quarter of a century to have seen, and borne an active part in, very much of suffering, pain, and death. Formerly, in medical practice, I have seen the whole course of cholera in London, Paris, and Bristol, and lastly here in my office of deacon. I have beheld many acts of self-devotion to its sufferers and victims, yet never have I witnessed anything that surpassed, or even equalled, the self-abandonment and self-sacrifice of these humble Sisters. It was not merely the nursing and tending the sick, or the performance of something more than the ordinary duties of nurse; but it was the doing of these acts in that spirit of love and sympathy to the members of Him, whose very body these poor sufferers were, which characterised their exertions.

Stretched upon the bed saturated with the sickness of this dreadful disease, their persons and dresses steeped in its poison, I have seen the sick and dying encompassed with the arms, their

cramped limbs embraced and chafed, their heads reclining on their necks ; now wiping with a gentle hand the fatal dampness from their sunk faces, now with affectionate entreaty pouring the medicine into their mouths, and then, in the intervals of repose, with lips close to their half-dull ears, whispering some kind words of love, hope of pardon for past sin, or repeating a short prayer or sentence of the Litany ; taking their hasty necessary meal from the common stock in the centre of the room, or often by the bedside, often leaving it unfinished to perform some menial act. And all this, too, amidst the gloom of that long array of shrivelled, collapsed, and leaden forms and faces, behind whose outward shroud Death was riding triumphant. They were awful times and solemn scenes. There was one redeeming feature—there was a halo of sanctity thrown around the persons of these calm Sisters which inspired hope, and even confidence, and which, more than all, checked and repressed that irreverence and untimely merriment and pleasantry too common in the wards of a hospital. That hospital was a sacred place. The medical gentlemen, who indeed right nobly exercised their high profession, often expressed the security in which they left the nurses under *their* direction.

With this “mother in Israel,” as she is styled in scorn, and with some of her little band, did I, the first night they began their labours in our parish, visit most of the houses where the visitation was most raging—with her have I literally, in one house, where nine of one family were swept away, stepped over the yet unclosed coffin of the dead, moved aside on the floor the miserable straw bed, where life was sinking fast, to reach the almost forgotten child. It moves me very much, my Lord, to retrace these things. They live in our saddened memory ; I would that Mr. Spurrell had not so shrivelled their love and charity into so small a compass as to force me to speak.

Night after night, and half through the night, have I known her remain in the hospital, or in these crowded rooms, and with but fragile health herself, and then has she gone to Devonport for the same work.

One young lady in our parish had just lost two brothers ; her two sisters were taken ill ; her father and brother were engaged in removing them, and in attending others of the family sick ; they were all worn out with toil. A note was sent in haste to

the Home. The poor lady was watched, nursed hour by hour by two sisters, each in turn of twelve hours, and by God's mercy she recovered. Let such a scene be realized. The dead brother in an adjoining room, not a soul in the house beside (for the servant had left in terror), the patient wandering in fever after the cold stage, one lone sister, with nothing but her little basket of cold refreshment and her book of devotions. True to her trust she kept her long and silent watch. How pure and steady was her love—how sacred and hallowed her patience!

One morning, just as day was dawning, I met, in the lane leading from the hospital, a sister carrying, as I thought, a large bundle. At a glance I saw she was worn and jaded with want of rest. I offered to relieve her—but she would not resign her charge. It was an infant just dead, to whose mother, whom she had left, she had promised to see it “decently laid out.” I could not but follow in silence; I feared for her safety; for I knew too well whither she was bent. We reached the dead-house—a forlorn dismal room; some dozen of rough black coffins, six or seven too sadly occupied with their mute inmates; a dull light peering through the shattered glass; silence and death keeping their dreary watch, and dividing the tenantry between them. Here she selected the wooden shroud,—how calmly and serenely she performed her promised task! sweetly she kissed the rested child, ere she closed the lid. Do the angels in heaven *always* behold the face of these children's Father? Well! pamphlets cannot interfere with that! I pass over much of this scene—her work was done, and she returned to the mother.

One poor girl was brought into the hospital from the work-house,—her whole face soiled and marred with the unmistakeable stain of early and continued sin. It was a heavy tale I listened to from her husky lips. An unkind word at home, too hastily acted up, a hurried journey to Plymouth, arrival at night, without food or shelter; allured by proffered relief, wronged and betrayed, and flung back in scorn upon the wide streets, the too common fate. Poor bewildered thing! she was very penitent for *her* sin, very forgiving to *him* who had made the wreck; but I know not how it was, she could not, would not, hope for her pardon. I strove very hard with her to assure her of peace, but it availed not; her life was mouldering away beneath a blank despair of the future; joy had forsaken her breast. I spoke to

the Sister. Hour after hour, for nearly two days and a night, she scarcely left her side; *her* gentle voice recalled to the poor ruined girl her earlier days of innocence and purity. Her shame soon vanished beneath the tender tones of that dear Sister. Could such, so pure as she, speak and yearn so tenderly over her defiled self? *then* there was One above who would. From time to time, as I passed, I watched the progress of the light that was beaming upon her soul; she sank calm and happy in the prospect of an undying world of bliss. Less than a Sister, I believe, could not have done this work.

I could write very much more, but I wish to be simple in statement, and those who did these works would shrink from their exposure. I do not wish to imply that others shrank from duties, or that there are not many who earnestly and faithfully helped to relieve and minister to the general distress; but what I do directly assert is, that there were some things done, which a Sister of Mercy's unselfish pity, untiring patience, and self-denial could alone achieve.

But it did not end with the disease. This seemed to open upon them a new sphere of action, and secured as from a solemn foundation their errands of mercy to the sick poor.

Several times since I have found the poor, from sudden illness, or from neglect, or from extreme poverty, in the deepest distress, and without attendance of any kind; and, unless actually employed, scarcely ever has the call for a Sister's help been refused.

Your Lordship asked me, did they in any way interfere with the clergy, or assume or usurp their functions? They never did in any way: and I will venture to say, that no book was ever used in the hospital, or, to the best of my belief, in the parish since, beyond the publications of the Christian Knowledge Society, and the well-known manuals of Ken, Taylor, Andrews, and the like authors.

I remain, with the deepest respect,

Your Lordship's humble servant,

GEO. H. HETLING.

*The Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Exeter,  
Bishopstowe.*

---

PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD-STREET.

BX  
5097  
P48  
1852

**THEOLOGY LIBRARY  
CLAREMONT  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
CLAREMONT, CA  
91711**

2/04

